err, I err willingly; and I vehemently refuſe to be convinced of it. And I truſt moſt of thoſe who do not believe a Trinity, are of the ſame mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a ſoul connected with this houſe of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly clod? You underſtand juſt nothing of the matter. So it is: but how, none can tell.

12. You ſurely believe you have a *Body*, together with your ſoul, and that each is dependent on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand; immediately pain is felt in your ſoul. On the other ſide, is ſhame felt in your ſoul? Inſtantly a bluſh overſpreads your cheek. Does the ſoul feel fear or violent anger? Preſently the body trembles. Theſe alſo are facts which you cannot deny: nor can you account for them.

13. I bring but one inſtance more. At the command of your ſoul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? for the connection between the act of the mind, and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for *muſcular motion* at all, in any inſtance of it whatever? When one of the moſt ingenious Phyſicians in *England* had finiſhed his lecture upon that head, he added, —"Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the diſcoveries of our enlightened age. And now, if you underſtand one jot of the matter, you underſtand more than I do."

The ſhort of the matter is this. Thoſe who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, muſt not believe, that there is a *ſun* in the firmament, that there is *light* ſhining around them, that there is *air*, though it encompaſſes them on every ſide, that there is any *earth*, though they ſtand upon it. They muſt not believe that they have a *ſoul*, no, nor that they have a *body*.

14. But

14. But, Secondly, as ſtrange as it may ſeem, in requiring you to believe, *There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe Three are One*: you are not required to believe any myſtery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. *Peter Browne*, ſometime Biſhop of *Cork*, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any myſtery at all. The Bible barely requires you, to believe ſuch *facts*, not the manner of them. Now the myſtery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the *manner*.

For inſtance. *God ſaid, let there be light, and there was light.* I believe it: I believe the plain *fact*; there is no myſtery at all in this. The myſtery lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me.

Again. *The word was made fleſh.* I believe this fact alſo. There is no myſtery in it; but as to the *manner how* he was made fleſh, wherein the myſtery lies, I know nothing about it, I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my underſtanding.

15. To apply this to the caſe before us. *There are Three that bear record in heaven—And theſe Three are One.* I believe this *fact* alſo, (if I may uſe the expreſſion,) That God is Three and One. But the *manner, how*, I do not comprehend: and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner*, lies the myſtery: and ſo it may; I have no concern with it. It is no object of my faith; I believe juſt ſo much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner*, he has not revealed: therefore I believe nothing about it. But would it not be abſurd in me, to deny the fact, becauſe I do not underſtand the manner? That is, to reject *what God has revealed*, becauſe I do not comprehend *what he has not revealed.*

16. This

16. This is a point much to be obſerved. There are many things, *Which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Part of theſe God hath *revealed to us by his Spirit: revealed*, that is, unveiled, uncovered: that part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed: that we need not, and indeed cannot believe: it is far above, out of our ſight.

Now where is the wiſdom of rejecting what is revealed, becauſe we do not underſtand what is not revealed? Of denying the *fact*, which God has unveiled, becauſe we cannot ſee the *manner*, which is veiled ſtill?

17. Eſpecially when we conſider that what God has been pleaſed to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference, is a truth of the laſt importance. It enters into the very heart of Chriſtianity; it lies at the root of all vital Religion.

Unleſs theſe three are one, how can *all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?* "I know not what to do," (ſays *Socinus* in a letter to his friend,) "with my untoward followers. They will not worſhip Jeſus Chriſt. I tell them, it is written, *Let all the angels of God worſhip him.* They anſwer, However that be, if he is not God, we dare not worſhip him. For, *It is written thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*"

But the thing which I here particularly mean is this: The knowledge of the Three-One God, is interwoven with all true Chriſtian Faith, with all vital Religion.

I do not ſay, that every real Chriſtian can ſay with the Marquis *de Renty*, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude

nitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of *babes*, but rather *fathers in Christ*.

But I know not how any one can be a Christian believer, till he *hath* (as St. *John* speaks) *the witness in himself*: till *the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God*: that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him, through the merits of God the Son; and having this witness, he honours the Son, and the blessed Spirit, *even as he honours the Father*.

18. Not that every Christian believer *adverts* to this; perhaps at first not one in twenty; but if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find, it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion, who denies that these Three are One. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved, during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance,) but that God, before they go hence, will *bring them to the knowledge of the truth*.

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GOSPEL of GRACE.

THE word *Gospel* properly signifies *good News*, or *glad tidings*: 'Tis a *message* sent or brought to us from heaven of good things. *Rom.* x, 15. The substance of it is; to tell fallen, condemned sinners of the human race, That Jesus is the Christ, who came into the world to save the chief of sinners: that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his son: that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, &c. All these things taken together in their blessed and extensive import as centring in one point is *the gospel*. And these things are told us openly and freely, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing we might have life in his name, or in what is declared concerning him as the saviour. This Gospel was preached to *Adam* in the first promise; to *Abraham*, when it was told him that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed: to *Israel* typically, in the whole system of sacrifices; *prophetically*, in the psalms and in all the prophets; and it is now exhibited to us, *historically* and *doctrinally* in the new testament, in the relation it gives us of the birth, life, death, resurrection and glorification of our Lord Jesus, and the account it gives us of the true and glorious design of all these things. Were we to sum up the whole; we shall find it to be as to its general strain, a declaration of *free* and *full* salvation in Jesus Christ, for lost, helpless and condemned sinners. The redemption obtained by Jesus Christ, is presented to our view as *quite necessary* for our salvation, as *quite suitable* to our condition, *as quite*

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free for our encouragement, and as *quite full* or compleat for our supply. This representation is so great and glorious, and contains such joyful particulars, that one would imagine it could not fail of affording at once, the most enlivening light, the most satisfying hope, the most solid joy, and the most spiritual strength and life to our souls. Such is certainly its nature, such is plainly its tendency, and such is its real influence and effect, wherever it is rightly understood and believed in *its* evidence and importance. This we are certain it never will be, without the divine teaching or influence of the spirit of truth and grace.

However hereby, the most valuable message, and the most glad tidings are brought us. This message, some neglect, others misunderstand; some despise and others dispute it, while many understand it so defectively, that it conveys no more pleasure or satisfaction to their minds, than if they had never heard it, or did not at all understand it. So that many persons sit under the sound of it, who are very little, if at all, enlivened, encouraged, or attracted by it. This proceeds from some remaining difficulties or objections, which still possess their minds, and hinder them of the joy, satisfaction, hope and love, that would otherwise arise in their minds upon the belief of it. For 'tis evident, that when this was preached of old, they who heard and understood it were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. *Acts* xiii, 48.

Let us therefore search a little into this matter, and attend to the objections and difficulties which rise in the mind; whereby it comes to pass that many receive no comfort and advantage to their souls by the declaration of it; so that it is in reality no *gospel* to them. For we must necessarily take it for granted, that it is in itself a message of great

great joy; otherwise it would not deserve that name.

It is then evident, that to many these glad tidings don't convey any pleasure, because they do not appear *suited* to their wants and desires. 'Tis to them a thing quite foreign from their thoughts and wishes; and so they despise or neglect it. One says in his heart, 'If you could bring me tidings of some worldly honours to be freely conferred, or of some large sums of money to be freely given, this would rejoice my heart. Or if you could tell me where and how I might enjoy such and such sensual pleasures, this would be very acceptable.'

The language spoken by the hearts of others is to this effect. 'If you could assure me any way, that I could live and indulge myself in sin, &c. with hopes of impunity, without fear of death or hell, this would be very good news to me.' But 'tis evident in both these cases, the sentiments of their hearts are directly contrary to the truth of God. For the former account the world their chief portion, and the latter esteem sin their greatest good. They don't perceive, they do not really believe the *suitableness* and importance of the salvation in Jesus Christ to their souls; and therefore it does not wear the aspect of good news in *their* view.

To others the proclamation of salvation in Christ alone is not good news, because they do not see it to be *quite necessary* for them. They do not think their case to be really so bad, as a full and free salvation intimates.

But after all, there is another great reason, why the glad tidings of the blessed gospel don't convey any real satisfaction; and that is, because the proper *freeness* of divine grace revealed, is not discerned or credited.

If a person in great want, be told of a free supply;

or

or a perſon in debt ready to be arreſted, be told of a free, able and willing ſurety; could this fail of giving him pleaſure, hope and ſatisfaction, on his hearing and believing it? And if it did not, would not every by-ſtander judge, that there muſt be ſome miſtake or doubt in his mind about it?— Therefore, there muſt be ſome defect or miſtake in our apprehenſion, if we have not ſome ſatisfying hope coming into our minds from the free goſpel of full ſalvation in Jeſus Chriſt for an helpleſs, undone ſinner.

Let me then repreſent, as clear as I can, what muſt be or may be the miſtake or doubt in the minds of many.

1. "The goſpel affords not relief to my mind, (ſays one) becauſe my ſin, and guilt have been greater than many, than moſt, or than *any* others. Mine iniquities have increaſed over my head, and my tranſgreſſions mount up to the very heavens. Look where I will I can find no relief; whether I look backward, inward, forward, or upward, all is dark and dreadful. My caſe is ſo peculiar, my ſins are ſo aggravated, &c. I cannot apprehend, that divine grace ſhould reach directly to ſuch a one as me." I Anſwer, are *any* guilty ſinners excluded out of the proclamation of grace? If they were, the goſpel would ceaſe to be glad tidings, not only to you, but to *every* one elſe: for we have *all* ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God; and if God ſhould mark iniquites, *none* could ſtand. You think that the goſpel may be joyful tidings to others, but not to you. But why ſo? You ſay, becauſe they are not ſo bad as I am and have been. This is the ſame as to ſay, that becauſe others are in ſome reſpects *better* than you, therefore they have more reaſon and better ground to hope in Chriſt than you have. But whoever thinks thus,

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'tis evident he does not apprehend the grace of God in Christ to be properly and directly free: and he imagines that he must be somewhat better than he is, before he may hope in Christ. But we are directly told, that Christ came into the world to save the *chief* of sinners; and that this faithful saying is worthy of *all* acceptation, and consequently worthy *your* acceptation, whoever you be or whatsoever you have been. You are right in thinking yourself the chief of sinners; but you wrong the grace and gospel of Christ, if you think or say, that you are not as welcome as any sinner upon the face of this earth to the redemption by Jesus Christ.

2. Another may be saying in his heart, 'But after all that the gospel reveals, 'tis no comforting or satisfying news to me; because I remember that Christ did not purchase this redemption for *all mankind*; neither has God purposed it for *all*; and therefore, though I know, that those who shall be saved, are saved by grace quite free and sovereign; yet I can be no way comforted by this, because I have no marks or evidences in my favour, to prove that I am of the number of the elected and redeemed. I can therefore only entertain a general possibility, I may be saved as well as another; but this is far from being sufficient to afford peace to my soul and conscience." I readily reply, 'Tis a real and important truth, that election and redemption are thus particular and sovereign, not universal nor conditional. But remember, that tho' the redemption by Christ is not universal in its *intention*, yet it is so in its *proclamation* to be believed for salvation. *John* iii. 14—17. Read over these verses and you may see, that here is good news, here are glad tidings indeed, presented to gain the belief of poor helpless sinners. This

free grace requires no previous marks or evidences of our own particular election or redemption, in order to afford immediate relief to the mind in believing it to be thus open and free. 'Tis true, God by his word requires us to believe the doctrines of particular election and redemption; in order to give us a view of the ſovereignty of his grace, and to prevent us from thinking it to be any way conditional, or ſuſpended upon any actings of ours. But yet it does by no means require us to believe our *own* particular election or redemption in order to our hope God-ward. It preſents the redempt on of Jeſus Chriſt directly before us as full and free; and whereſoever that takes proper effect upon the mind, conſcience and conduct, this is the proper and only evidence of our own election. For our election of God is known by the goſpel coming with power, &c. 1 *Theſſ.* i. 4. 5. Say not then, to allude to *Rom.* x. 6. Who ſhall aſcend into heaven for us, to ſee whether our names are in the book of life? But look into the goſpel and ſee whether thy name as a ſinner be not *there*, and whether the grace therein revealed is not free for thee and for any.

3. Another's thought may be working this way. "But alas, after all you can ſay, or I can find in the word about the freedom of divine grace, it gives me no ſatisfaction; for I know that the work of the holy ſpirit is neceſſary to bring the ſoul and Chriſt together; and becauſe I do not find his influence upon my heart, I am therefore greatly perplexed and at as great a loſs almoſt as if there was no ſuch goſpel preached to me."

I anſwer, 'tis very certain and undoubted, that the ſpirit's work is neceſſary, ſovereign and effectual. But what then? Muſt we *feel* or be conſcious of any work of the ſpirit upon our hearts, before

fore we believe the testimony of free grace, to the satisfaction of our consciences? If so, this would utterly overturn the open freedom of the grace of God: and the work of the spirit would be so explained and conceived, as to stand in opposition to the word of the gospel. In my view, there is scarcely a clearer proof of the necessity of the spirit's work to show us the true grace of God; than the continual propensity appearing in us, thus to pervert it or mistake it, and to aim to place even the consciousness of the spirit's work, between a free Christ and our souls. The spirit does not speak of himself; his work is to show us the things of Christ, and to make us know the grace of God in the truth. Read the account given of his work and office in *John* xvi. 7—11. and 1 *Cor.* ii. 9—16. where it is most fully explained; and there you will see, that his work does by no means stand in opposition to the freedom of gospel grace; but on the contrary, 'tis a confirmation of it: for he sets his seal to it, when he brings this free grace to our minds, and so gives us peace and satisfaction from it.

4. The mind of another person may be perplexed in this way. "I can receive no satisfaction to my soul from the gospel report, because the scripture says, *unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Now I know not whether I am regenerated or no; I cannot find to my satisfaction that I have any principle of grace in my heart; and therefore I can have no true pleasure or peace, unless I can some way or other be assured of this." In this manner many souls bring in abundance of objections against themselves, and make the glad tidings of salvation in Christ of none effect to them; because they conceive, that a consciousness of their own regeneration is previously necessary to peace and hope God-ward.

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But remember, ſuch is the freeneſs of grace, that an aſſurance of our being regenerated is no way previouſly neceſſary to a reſting the ſoul upon free forgiveneſs proclaimed in the goſpel. Suppoſe then you do not know your own regeneration, ſhould this hinder you, ſhould this diſcourage you from believing free forgiveneſs and ſo enjoying a conſcious intereſt therein by faith? Remember likewiſe, that ſo far as the thought of theſe defects *diſcourages* you, ſo far they intimate you are ſeeking your encouragement ſome way, in and from yourſelves. But behold, *all* this which you imagine you muſt be conſcious of, to beget and maintain hope towards God; all this I ſay, is the effect of the faith of the goſpel upon the mind: for we are regenerated by the word of truth. *James* i. 18. 'Tis therefore a ſenſe and ſight of this free grace truth which lies at the bottom of all the true change made in our thoughts, affections and conduct.

5. But ſome may farther ſay, 'Faith is neceſſary to ſalvation; now I cannot find any faith in me; I cannot exert the act of truſting aright: I am not able, I have not ſtrength to believe.' I reply; if by this complaint, you mean that you cannot believe divine grace to be ſo free, that you may directly reſt your ſoul upon it; that you are not perſuaded of the free ability of Chriſt to ſave to the uttermoſt; then I am called upon to offer evidence for it from the divine word, and to prove it from thence to your conviction; on purpoſe that you may be ſatisfied of it and ſatisfied by it.

But if you ſtill ſay; "I have no doubt about that; only I can receive no comfort from it for want of having and diſcerning faith and its exerciſes and actings in my ſoul." Then 'tis evident, you are now conceiving faith and its actings, in ſuch a light as to be a ſort of objection to the open direct freeneſs of

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divine grace: And ſo inſtead of believing it, you do in fact object to it. Whereas, if you did really believe it in its proper view, you would not make your want of any thing in yourſelf (call it faith or by any other name) an objection; but would directly have hope and relief from what you believe concerning the grace of God in Chriſt; and being thus encouraged and relieved, you would then know experimentally what it is to hope, truſt, love, &c. which you ſtrive at otherwiſe in vain.—But to conclude.

6. Some may ſtill ſay, "I cannot, I dare not reſt ſatisfied in the general hope of the goſpel; Becauſe it does not, it cannot of itſelf (let me believe it ever ſo clearly and firmly) aſſure me of my own *particular* intereſt in Chriſt, or that I *ſhall* be ſaved by him. The goſpel is only a general open proclamation; it does not ſay directly to any one, you are elected, redeemed, regenerated, or in a ſtate of ſalvation.——This is indeed a very great entanglement to many minds; and it is often ſo impreſs'd, as to render the goſpel in all its glory and freedom, of little uſe to relieve or ſupport the ſoul. For hereby they are driven to think the Goſpel inſufficient, and to ſeek after or wiſh to introduce ſomething more than what is therein exhibited, to raiſe, ſupport, encourage and ſtrengthen the ſoul. ——But I apprehend this ariſes from one or other of theſe cauſes.

Either (1.) a defective view of the proper freedom of divine grace; or elſe (2.) a deſire after and an eagerneſs for ſuch an aſſurance of ſalvation, as is neither neceſſary for us, nor would be uſeful to us.

As to the *Firſt*, What tho' the goſpel proclamation is open, general and unreſtrained, why may it not exhibit a free welcome, and afford an immediate ground of hope and encouragement, to any ſinner as ſuch?